

## RAPA NUI

Rapa Nui political events, issues, legislation, and social movements from 2017–2018 articulated across a complex spectrum of local, national, regional, and global scales that transected terrestrial as well as oceanic and discursive fields. Disputes over control of Rapa Nui cultural heritage, sacred places, and the ocean that occurred during the prior review period remained focal. Ley de Residencia—the law for controlling Chilean and international migration to Rapa Nui, which was approved by Chile’s national legislature at the close of review last year—was officially implemented in 2018 with the general support of Rapa Nui leadership. As the review year concluded, movement to change the official name for the island continued to gain support; however, the election of a new Chilean president forebodes a future that could radically differ from the broadly progressive present that Rapa Nui realized under the left-of-center administration led by President Michelle Bachelet.

Some of the breadth of island politics were visible during a visit to the island in September 2017, where I participated in a locally organized international seminar entitled “Dialogues Sobre Derechos Humanos Desde La Perspectiva Del Pueblo Mā’ori Rapa Nui” (Dialogues on Human Rights from the perspective of the Mā’ori Rapa Nui people), held at the Tojariki Cultural Center in Hapa Roa. The seminar included approximately thirty speakers and was organized by the Rapa Nui–determined organization Honui (an assembly of “family clan” (hua’ai)

leaders), the Council of Elders, and the Parlamento Rapa Nui along with the support of the Municipality of Easter Island and the International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) (Sandoval 2017). Speakers included representatives of Indigenous peoples of the Basque territory of Europe, Bolivia, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Tahiti; scholars with expertise on self-determination in Cook Islands, globalization, and Indigenous rights in Mexico; Rapa Nui representatives; attorneys for Rapa Nui people in state and international arenas; and anthropologists of Rapa Nui, including myself and Grant McCall.

The seminar participants’ peaceful dialogue was contrasted by the signs encircling the cultural center, which traced an island world entangled in a “battle order” (Foucault 1980, 16). Outside, the offices of the governor were covered in banners and flags coded in Spanish, Rapa Nui, and English that condemned the Chilean government as an “usapador” (usurper) conducting “consultas ilegales” (illegal consultations). Signs also demanded that “their own people” and not the “Government of Chile decide for us.” Up the road, large banners and black flags denigrated the front gate of the five-star hotel Hangaroa Eco-Village and Spa with slogans like “Hanga Roba Hotel Pirata” coupled with graphic images of guns paired with skull and crossbones and statements that the hotel was “built on stolen land.” Inside the seminar venue, Nancy Yáñez, the leading attorney for Honui and a descendant of the Indigenous Mapuche people of Chile, emphasized that

self-determination for Rapa Nui was supported by the “founding principles of the United Nations,” which require all member state governments to provide “tools for people to freely define their political status” (Sandoval 2017). Attorney Ciro Colombara—who is currently representing Parlamento Rapa Nui and the Council of Elders in an ongoing legal case filed against the Chilean state in 2015 at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) within the Organization of American States (*Economía y Negocios*, 15 Nov 2015)—advised the Rapa Nui people that “the outcome of the lawsuit” will be fundamental to the “path” that they should organize for self-determination in the coming years (Sandoval 2017). An outcome statement of the seminar asserted that Rapa Nui people consider any “state title” or “concession” regulating their ancestral territory as an unacceptable “limitation of the territorial rights of the Rapa Nui people,” and that they aspire to “have full ownership rights over their lands and territories” based on “ancestral occupation” that is “regulated by customary law.” The outcome statement and the voices of participants from within the seminar, as well as the symbolic banners outside, constitute useful regimes of “veridiction and jurisdiction” for assessing the indigenous politics of the review period (Foucault 1991, 79); that is, what should politically be known (veridiction) and done (jurisdiction) in the island world.

Following the seminar in September, global media attention to the Rapa Nui case at the IACHR was notably linked to the Catalunya independence movement from Spain

(Anarte 2017). Yet as the review period closes, there are no new reports regarding the case since the registering of testimony by Matías Riroroko, given during a commission hearing in March 2017 that denounced historical and contemporary “use of violence and police repression” by Chile (Organization of American States 2017). Erity Teave, vice president of Parlamento Rapa Nui, emphasized that the case regards the restoration of the rights of Rapa Nui people to “the collective property of its territory,” which the state of Chile undermined as it colonized the island beginning in the late nineteenth century, doing so in violation of the 1888 bilateral treaty known as the “Agreement of Wills” (*Acuerdo de Voluntades*) signed by Rapa Nui and Chilean representatives (*El Ciudadano*, 25 Sept 2017). José Rapu, an elected commissioner of the Island Development Commission (CODEIPA), saw the state delays with the IACHR as reflective of a history of state “paternalism and colonialism” that fails to build the capacity of the Rapa Nui people “to develop” on their own terms and to truly solve “the problems of the island” (Bertin 2017). While the state assured the commission of its “willingness to engage in dialogue” (Organization of American States 2017), Chile was noted as not responding within the period requested by the court (Vallejos 2017). Irrespective of the delays, attorney Colombara insisted he had “no doubt about the legal soundness of the case” and its consistency with the history of “the jurisprudence of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights” that has “recognized the collective property rights of indigenous

peoples over their territories” (Bertin 2017).

As the seminar concluded on 9 September 2017, a date that marked the anniversary of the 1888 initiation of Chilean colonization in Rapa Nui, the Chilean state announced the official designation of a Marine Protected Area (MPA) of multiple uses around Rapa Nui. Pew Charitable Trusts commended the declaration and highlighted its own role in the “education and training” that helped to facilitate the process (Pew Charitable Trusts 2017). The declaration followed a series of public consultations that began in July (Gobernación Isla de Pascua, 13 July 2017), continuing until a vote on 28–29 August that was later tabulated as resulting in a 62 percent approval of coadministration of the MPA (Gobernación Isla de Pascua, 4 Sept 2017). Coadministration is supposed to include elected representatives of the Rapa Nui people within CODEIPA and of island fishing organizations; both had previously been excluded in the 2015 presidential proposal for the MPA and consequently denounced the proposal, as well as its coordination with Pew, as colonial (Young 2018, 198–202).

Though a positive step for Rapa Nui working within Chilean regimes of veridiction and jurisdiction in comparison to the 2015 proposal, island communication within and outside of the September 2017 seminar resonated significant public dissonance regarding the declaration. Next to the aforementioned banners surrounding the governor’s office, signs also declared “Pew—Go Home!” and commanded “No Parque Marino! Haka rē te vaikava o te Rapa Nui!” (No Marine

Park! Leave the ocean of the Rapa Nui people alone!). Inside the seminar, a leading elder fisherman gave a speech contesting the July and August consultations, stressing that the final plebiscite amounted to a set of “papers” (parau) “for taking” (me’e toke) “the ocean” (te vaikava) of the Rapa Nui people. His critique accorded with an 18 July letter to President Bachelet signed by the leading representatives of Honui, a copy of which I obtained as a seminar participant. The letter characterized the entire consultation processes as not only “illegal”—given that it did not work within international frameworks of self-determination—but also as a tool of “assimilation” and potential “genocide.” The local environmental nongovernmental organization Kakaka Ecological Here Henu‘a Mā‘ori Rapa Nui and the women’s group Movimiento Komari also registered public criticism of the designation. They historically contextualized it as extending state “violation” of the 1888 Agreement of Wills, which they anticipate will be “detrimental to current and future generations.” They think that the purported goal of the MPA to help conserve world diversity is a “false premise” that conceals its entanglement in the production of benefits for “external systems alien to our ancestral culture” (El Ciudadano, 31 Aug 2017).

Rapa Nui alarm is substantiated by a diversity of global concerns with MPAs. Though MPAs worldwide are promoted in mass media as tools of ocean conservation, they are ultimately embedded in the goliath World Bank project of a “blue economy” that values the ocean in the trillions of US dollars (World Bank 2018).

This regime of capital accumulation monetizes the ocean for aquaculture, blue-carbon trading, industrial fisheries, and seabed mining (Campbell and others 2016, 518–528), which local and indigenous peoples worldwide have experienced as a form of “ocean grabbing” that jeopardizes their livelihood (Pedersen and others 2014). As a regime of marine governance that helps standardize their access to and control over “blue resources” (Barbasaard 2018, 145), “powerful actors” like rent-seeking state officials, large-scale international conservation organizations, big tourist companies, and state treasuries promote MPA-style conservation (Benjaminsen and Bryceson 2012, 337); however, the “scientific basis” underlying MPAs is questioned (Campbell and others 2016, 535–536), and the overall capacity of blue economy projects to restore and sustain “ocean health” is unknown (Barbasaard 2018, 145).

Chilean interest in increased regulation of the ocean may thus be read in accord with its broader history of neoliberal environmental agendas. While green policies often emerged in states in the 1960s and 1970s in response to internal social organization of citizens motivated by a “concern for health and ecological conditions,” in Chile such policies were formed by external concerns with “trade and investment,” especially in relation to satisfying the conditions of participation in global trade associations, like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Tecklin, Bauer, and Prieto 2011, 884–886). Chile has implemented neoliberal environmental policies throughout the south of the state that dispossess Indigenous Mapuche

people while selling and leasing territory to “green grabbing” billionaires privatizing nature for a variety of interests (Holmes 2014). Amid announced proposals of Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) megaprojects like an underwater fiber-optic cable linking China and Chile through the ocean of Rapa Nui (Young 2018, 201), the MPA could indeed be an oceanic extension of Chile’s neoliberal “market-enabling” policies for the environment (Tecklin, Bauer, and Prieto 2011, 882–884). Development projects have been known to be implemented for their “side-effects” (Ferguson with Lohman 2016, 192–193). Since Chile implemented environmental policy on the continent in the context of NAFTA, and as China has intensified its political economic investments in Oceania (Wesley-Smith 2013), the MPA could ultimately prove to be less about the conservation of marine life and more about establishing the environmental conditions that would enable Chile to catch big Chinese fish in the World Bank sea of blue economic growth. Indigenous politics of Chinese capital in Cook Islands (Webb 2016, 54–55) and Chile (Aylwin, Silva, and Vargas 2018, 220) continue to be on the horizon for Rapa Nui. Although the MPA designation would be seemingly designed to protect the island from megaprojects, as the review period ended, public discussion of the fiber-optic cable development continued with state authorities.

On 23 November 2017, President Bachelet signed a decree on the hal-  
lowed grounds of Ahu Tojariki, establishing full indigenous administration of the Chilean National Park (Rapa Nui National Park) on the island. The

change marks the end of a colonial state policy that began in 1935 that territorialized Rapa Nui “sacred places” (vahi tapu) and “ancestral valuables” (hauha‘a tupuna) within the park—a policy created without the consultation of the Indigenous people (Teave and Cloud 2014, 410). Full administration emerged after two years of struggle against mandated coadministration implemented through state force (Young 2017), which followed indigenous reclamation of the territory and heritage in March 2015 led by Parlamento Rapa Nui (Young 2016a). Full administration is based on a fifty-year “concession” of state management to the indigenous community organization known as Ma‘u Henua (Gobernación de Isla de Pascua, 23 Nov 2017). While the concession is conceived as an important step toward self-determination by Rapa Nui people generally, like the MPA, it was opposed by key leaders and indigenous institutions. Honui representatives protested the concession in letters to UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Victoria Tauli-Corpuz as well as the IACHR. Concession is seen in the letters to undermine Rapa Nui claims to “territorial rights” that would reestablish the collective indigenous “ownership” of the land (El Ciudadano, 18 Nov 2017). In August 2018 interviews, Erity Teave described the concession as a “slap in the face,” reflecting a history of state strategy of attempting to avoid comprehensive conflict resolution with Rapa Nui by offering them “huja huja” (crumbs). Island Mayor Petero Edmunds also contested the concession and refused to participate in the

Tojariki ceremony (El Ciudadano, 18 Nov 2017). While appreciative of progression from coadministration to full, Rapa Nui denouncing the concession contest the legitimacy of the state authority to cede land to Rapa Nui in terms similar to the ways families have disputed state authority to grant “titulo dominio” (land titles) to island territory. Rapa Nui leaders have long maintained that the state cannot coherently give titles to territory because they deny the state has any titles to give. Many Rapa Nui people conceive their entitlement to land as not constituted “from the Chilean government” but through “genealogy traced to Hotu Matu‘a,” the founding Rapa Nui chief of the island (Young 2016c, 140).

The politics of Rapa Nui control of hauha‘a tupuna were not limited to the island itself during the year under review. On 27 January 2018, New Zealand’s Canterbury Museum, the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, and the Otago Museum returned “ancestral bones” (ivi tupuna) to the Rapa Nui people—the first international repatriation to Rapa Nui in history (El Programa de Repatriación Rapa Nui, 1 Feb 2018). The repatriation included two skulls and was organized by El Programa de Repatriación Rapa Nui: Ka Haka Hoki Mai Te Mana Tupuna, a grassroots organization created by Indigenous leader Piru Huke Atan and fellow Rapa Nui cultural leaders in 2013 with leading coordination by Jacinta Arthur and Mario Tuki. El Programa de Repatriación Rapa Nui is the first repatriation program created in Chile and has received recognition from the National Monu-

ments Council (Arthur 2019). The *ivi tupuna* were returned following a departure ceremony at the ceremonial *Marae Tuahiwi*, followed by a welcoming ceremony at the *Mataveru International Airport* in Rapa Nui; they are to be held temporarily at the *Father Sebastian Englert Anthropological Museum* until community dialogue with the state establishes a protocol for their final reburial. *Piru Huke* emphasized that she and her fellow “children of *Hotu Matu‘a*” are “deeply grateful” to the Māori “for returning their *tupuna*” to their land (*El Programa de Repatriación Rapa Nui*, 1 Feb 2018). The process of repatriation was a political struggle. Despite initial recognition of *El Programa de Repatriación Rapa Nui*, the Chilean National Monuments Council opposed many of their efforts in terms of an agenda of “neoliberal multiculturalism” that manages cultural and biological heritage as state patrimony valued for scientific study rather than “ontological restoration” of indigenous peoples (Arthur 2019).

*Ley de Residencia* was implemented 1 August 2018, following its March 2018 publication in the state government gazette as *Ley 21,070* (*Gobernación Isla de Pascua*, 23 March 2018). The official purpose of the law is to “regulate the exercise of the rights to reside, stay and move to and from the special territory of Easter Island” (*Colegio Abagados* 2018). According to article 5, “Any person, Chilean or foreign, who enters Easter Island, may remain in the special territory for a maximum period of thirty days”; qualifications of residency terms are detailed further in the context of sixty-two articles, but the key

change is that prior to this law a Chilean national could continue to stay in Rapa Nui beyond a visit for tourism (*Colegio Abagados* 2018). The *CODEIPA* commissioners of Rapa Nui publicly voiced general approval of the law, though Commissioner *Zoilo Huke* acknowledged “it is not perfect,” and Commissioner *José Rapu* noted that it did not achieve “what we aspired to in its entirety.” Commissioner *Poki Tane Haoa* highlighted it as promoting the “common good,” and Commissioner *Anakena Manu-tomatoma* described it as establishing an important step for “ordering” and “caring” for our territory “sustainably.” In a context where uncontrolled migration was perceived as resulting in problems with managing energy, pollution, waste, and water as well as loss of “respect for traditions,” Commissioner *Irene Haoa* considered the law a valuable “tool of protection” that could help Rapa Nui “return to live with *umaha*” (*Gobernación Isla de Pascua*, 23 March 2018); that is, a way of life of solidarity. *Parlamento Rapa Nui Vice-President Erity Teave*, in interviews with me, also supported the law; she hoped, however, that some of the content of the first articles would be refined and become more restrictive. In the current version, a settler with a residency on the island can authorize island migration of their extended family; many Rapa Nui would like that to be limited to nuclear family only.

As the review period came to a close, changes in Chilean national politics suggested that some of the political progress achieved by Rapa Nui under President *Bachelet*, irrespective of its limitations, could come to

a screeching halt. Sebastian Piñera, “Chile’s Donald Trump” (Arostegui 2018), was reelected president of Chile under the right-wing Renovación Nacional party during November and December 2017, officially replacing President Bachelet on 11 March 2018. On assuming office, he activated a cabinet that included officials historically supportive of infamous dictator Pinochet as well as the Colonia Dignidad organization of German Chileans used by Pinochet to torture and murder opponents of his regime (*The Guardian*, 23 Jan 2018). Leviante Araki, president of Parlamento Rapa Nui, encouraged “all Chileans” to not vote for Piñera (Biobio, 27 June 2017). He denounced the candidacy of Piñera in terms of his prior record of human rights violations against Indigenous peoples of Chile generally, and particularly in Rapa Nui where Piñera is held responsible for the violence that state special forces known as “Gope” inflicted upon Rapa Nui during the 2010 political conflicts (CNN Chile, 27 June 2017). State brutality led to the successful granting of precautionary measures against Chile at the IACHR, investigations by the United Nations, condemnations on the US Congressional floor, and detailed articulations of state violation of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the IWGIA (Young 2016b, 264–266). Piñera’s initial actions against Indigenous peoples during his second presidency suggest his new administration is capable of imposing further oppression of the Rapa Nui island world. In June, he announced the expansion of his Gope team of special forces,

now empowered by new weapons and “armored vehicles,” trained to fight “terrorism” by military forces “of the United States and Colombia” that the state intends to use to combat the Indigenous Mapuche people of Southern Chile (*Santiago Times*, 29 June 2018). Disturbingly, these actions follow increased use of the State Terrorist Act to criminalize Indigenous peoples of Chile in 2017 (Aylwin, Silva, and Vargas 2018), an act that originated under Pinochet to criminalize leftist opposition (Richards 2013, 103) and began to be applied to Indigenous peoples in Chile during the 1990s under the administration of Patricio Aylwin in conflicts with Mapuche (Carruthers and Rodriguez 2009, 749). Today, it is criticized as violating international “due process guarantees” (Amnesty International 2018) and broadening the scope of terrorism so as to criminalize cases of indigenous land and property conflict beyond standard definitions of the term (Richards 2010, 73–76). Mapuche incarcerated by the act identify themselves as “political prisoners” (Carruthers and Rodriguez 2009, 749). In 2017, experts to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) “urged” Chile to stop prosecuting its indigenous peoples under antiterrorism legislation (OHCHR 2017), which consequently came under official review by the United Nations Committee Against Torture the following year (El Mostrador, 14 Aug 2018).

From 2017–2018, as in the representation of the 2010–2011 indigenous political occupations and consequent state violence, there are competing discourses for “placing”

the Rapa Nui world and ascribing meaning to the “various things, people, histories, and events” (Young 2012, 2–3). Within the discourse of Chilean law, this year Rapa Nui people significantly destabilized forces and institutions that have long marginalized and manipulated their subject position in favor of networks of tourist, state, and scientific actors. In addition to strengthening control over their cultural heritage and demography, as well as marine and terrestrial resources, as the period concluded Rapa Nui appear to be gaining control of the nomenclature that has defined them in terms of “history beginning with the arrival of Europeans” (Hau‘ofa 2008, 62). Camilo Rapu, president of Ma‘u Henua, lauded the progress of the state parliamentary processes initiating a formal change of the island name from “Easter Island” (Isla de Pascua) to Rapa Nui. For Rapu, the toponym “Easter Island” is the “inheritance of the slaveholder” world of colonial history (Adprensa, 8 July 2018). Rapu, like many others, hoped to empower instead the name “Rapa Nui”—one that honors their “cultural heritage” and authority to name themselves (Adprensa, 8 July 2018). While remaining entangled in a concession, MPA, and migration laws that foreclose a comprehensive form of self-determination—which Rapa Nui continue to pursue through the IACHR and United Nations—it would be mistaken to think that Rapa Nui regimes of veridiction and jurisdiction have failed to progress. Significant discursive, legal, oceanic, and terrestrial steps that have started to close the settler colonial world of “Easter Island” are opening Rapa Nui

upon alternative paths of indigenous creation.

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